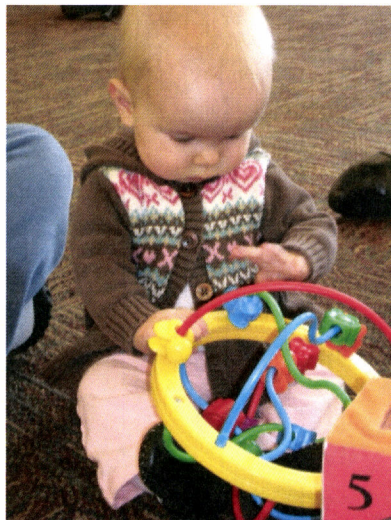


Supporting early literacy in Montana's libraries



- 62,000 children ages 0-5 in our state
- Children ages 0-5 thrive in an environment that provides positive social interactions, rich language exposure, and early literacy experience.
- Public libraries provide books, information, a safe and warm place, parental support, and social connection at a time when families need it most.
- Public libraries are in almost every community and are FREE
- 1 in 4 children under the age of 5 live in poverty in Montana. . . that's over 15,000 young children. (2011 Montana Kids Count) Providing the resources for them now reduces what they will need later, and what we will inevitably have to pay for later.
- There is a big gap between what we know and what we do. We know that 85% of brain development is formed in these early years, but less than 4% of public money is spent on education and development during these first years. (Montana Kids Count)
- It's pay now, or pay later. We now have the long-term research that conclusively shows us the strong, consistent return on public investment in young children.
- The State Library can offer support to Montana libraries to provide services and resources to families. The Ready2Read project, begun in 2009, offers early literacy training, as well as needed books and materials, to help even the smallest Montana libraries serve families.
- State libraries in Utah, Oregon, Idaho and Washington—as well as most other states-- fund youth services and early literacy full-time positions to address this important audience. Idaho has 2 ½ dedicated staff for early literacy at the Idaho Commission for Libraries. These neighboring states provide great models for us as we move forward in addressing the needs of families in our communities.

